

Revelation 1:9-20

The experience of meeting a famous person is sometimes disconcerting. He or she may be less impressive than we had imagined. But when John sees Jesus face to face, he is overwhelmed with his magnificence. John's experience challenges us to ask whether we have ever met the same Person. Or do we follow a pale, distorted copy of the real Lord?

Warm Up Question(s) – choose one

- What images or pictures do you have or have you seen of Jesus?¹ Which was/is most helpful? Least?
- Of the “famous” people that you have met, which seem more or less impressive than you imagined him/her to be?

Discovering the Word

- 1) **Read Revelation 1:9-20.** How does John describe himself and his situation? What is the setting for the vision he receives?
- 2) John “saw seven golden lampstands”(v.12)? What do they symbolize (v. 20) and how does the symbol work?²
- 3) How would you describe to others something you had never seen before? What initial impressions do you get from John’s description?
- 4) John's vision of Jesus is rich with biblical symbolism. Use a cross-reference bible to help to find and explore other scriptures where these images are also used. What added impressions or understandings do you know have? Which images impress you most with the magnificence of Jesus, and why (vv. 13-16)?
- 5) How would Jesus' relationship to these churches (v. 13) encourage them to fulfill their function during hard times?
- 6) Why do you think a godly person like John would be so powerfully overcome by the presence of the One he loved (v. 17)?
- 7) How would Jesus' words encourage John not to be fearful in his presence (vv. 17-18)?

Applying the Word

- Revelation was written to churches persecuted under a totalitarian regime. Our society seems friendlier, yet how is it hostile to us both morally and spiritually?
- How has this passage enlarged your vision of who Jesus is?
- How can this vision of Jesus encourage us to resist the seductions of our society?

¹ E.g. “I first got acquainted with Jesus when I was a child, singing “Jesus Loves Me” in Sunday school, addressing bedtime prayers to “Dear Lord Jesus,” watching Bible Club teachers move cut out figures across a flannel graph board. I associated Jesus with Kool-Aid and sugar cookies and gold stars for good attendance. I remember especially one image from Sunday school...Jesus cradled a small sleeping lamb. I imagined myself as that lamb, blessed beyond all telling.” Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew*, p. 13.

² Robert Louis Stevenson, the author of classic books like *Treasure Island*, spent his childhood in Edinburgh, Scotland, in the 19th century. As a boy, Robert was intrigued by the work of the old lamplighters who went about with a ladder and a torch, setting the street lights ablaze for the night. One evening, as young Robert stood watching with fascination, his parents asked him, “Robert, what in the world are you looking at out there?” With great excitement he exclaimed, “*Look at that man! He’s punching holes in the darkness!*”